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ABSTRACT

The organizational model was designed to allow faculty members in a large academic department to participate in decisions concerning courses, curriculum, and programs. Rather than encouraging faculty to work independently on teaching and committee assignments, the model promotes the sharing of information, teamwork, and interdepartmental cooperation. This group-centered model resulted from the merger of two departments in a university in which strict collective bargaining guidelines constrained all aspects of faculty work and roles. The organizational matrix clusters faculty across content areas and programs, each of which is represented by an academic coordinator or facilitator. At the start of a new year, department faculty identify and vote on goals to be achieved. The leadership to attain those goals is the responsibility of the coordinators, working in pairs. The preparation of the coordinators as leaders is essential to the success of the model. Meetings should be scheduled so that any faculty member may attend without conflict in the regular teaching schedule. All in-depth discussions take place within the smaller cluster meetings, with recommendations brought to the total faculty meetings. (MSE)

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A Group-Centered Leadership Model for Academic Departments

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"A GROUP-CENTERED LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS"

A faculty participatory model is proposed for large departments in academia. The organizational model proposed by Brightwell (1982) formalizes interaction among faculty members representing different programs and concentrations within a single department. The proposed matrix, with modifications, has the potential for achieving organizational developmental goals with professors concerning program modifications, teaching styles, test construction theory, learning theory and general information exchange among faculty levels (instructor-professor).

This organizational model focuses on program and subject matter content within departments and provides for faculty clusters or forums representing programs and curriculums/concentrations. The matrix represents an application of participatory management and "flat" organization theory.

The underlying thesis of this faculty-centered model is that faculty should be involved in all decisions that are curricular or program based. Many large departments in universities do not provide formalized structures for information exchange, discussion of controversial issues, and individual growth and self-development.

Group-Centered Leadership

Introduction

The purpose of this presentation is to encourage leaders of academic departments in higher education to examine the organizational structure of those departments. The organization model that is presented herein for examination and consideration was originally developed to allow faculty members in a large department to participate in decisions concerning courses, curriculums and programs. The "academic model" was developed to accomplish the following goals:

1. to establish a system that would provide for faculty participation in any academic changes that might occur;

2. to establish a forum to encourage "academic" communication and the sharing of information regarding such topics as: content of courses, ideas about teaching styles, ways to help students learn, test construction, grading plans, etc.

3. to develop more cohesion and teaming by encouraging faculty members to work together in achieving goals that have been established as important;

4. to improve intradepartmental relationships among faculty across subject matter areas, gender, age, experience and professorial rank;

5. to focus on the responsibility faculty members have for updating course content and implementing changes in courses and programs of the department.

The Department

The academic department is responsible for achieving the goals most important to an institution of higher education: teaching, service and research. The department, as an organization that exists to attain these goals, has not been analyzed for its effectiveness or efficiency by scholars from either the social or management sciences. The thesis of the authors is that the academic department is the primary organization in the university, yet little attention has been given to its structure and function. Normally, organizational charts for universities will place the academic department chair/head in a reporting line to a dean or director, and faculty members are dipicted as responsible to a department chair/head. Organizational charts for departments will usually identify the various committees such as: curriculum, promotion and tenure, honors, social, etc. Faculty members are given teaching and committee assignments and generally allowed to pursue work <u>independently</u>.

While a line chart indicates administrative reporting authority, the main thrust of a department is academic in nature! How does an academic department achieve its goals? How is faculty expertise utilized to the utmost? Are faculty members provided with opportunities to express ideas on how a program of study can be improved? Is creativity among faculty reinforced and encouraged? Are faculty members (and/or the department chair) aware of the talents and abilities of colleagues? Is the organizational climate of the department conducive to sharing ideas or criticisms about present practice? What is the best organizational arrangement for utilizing the human resources (effectiveness) available? The topics above are some concerns that are important in attempting to analyze and understand the behavior of members in an academic department in higher education.

Organizational Theory

The field of organizational behavior is concerned with group behavior in all types of settings. However, most studies are concerned with organizations representing business, industry and government. Individuals from several disciplines have made contributions to subjects important to understanding the behavior of people in organizations. Topics important to this field of inquiry are role theory, communication patterns, group cohesion, goal clarity, individual and group psychology, personality theory, leadership styles and organizational development and structure.

Organizational Theory in Education

Individuals interested in applying organizational theory concepts will find that the bulk of theory and research has been developed outside the field of education. Recently, Drucker (1988) predicted the structure of organizations of the future will be more information-based and will demand more specialists. These specialists, Drucker contends, will represent an information-based organization that has a flatter structure and greater emphasis on individual responsibility for relationships and communication within the group. Further, members of this "new organization" will accept responsibility and think about information that is needed to accomplish a certain task. "Because the 'players' in an information-based organization are specialists, they cannot be told how to do their work" (Drucker, p. 49). This description seems to have trappings of the professorship in higher education and the academic department at the present time! Academic departments in higher education, like other organizations, are normally composed of individuals who have expertise in different aspects of the discipline. It is not unusal for several professors in a department to be more knowledgeable in their specialities than the department leader (Brightwell, 1982).

New Models are Needed

Clearly, the academic department is not a line organization. The structure of a department in an institution of higher learning should reflect the functions and goals for which it exists. Therefore, the recommendation of new models to "fit" the needs of the situation is appropriate.

The Group-Centered Model

The authors of this paper are recommending for consideration and discussion a faculty-participatory model that was developed by Brightwell in 1974 to meet the needs of a large department (N=34) that resulted from the merger of two separate departments of health and physical education. The model was first utilized in a department at a university where the faculty and administration were under a collective bargaining contract. Strict guidelines existed regarding all aspects of faculty appointments, including the teaching load, course assignments, number and type of course preparations, tenure, promotion and release time for certain roles in the faculty unit.

Matrix Arrangement

The graphic display (see attachment) depicts a matrix structure which focuses on academic content areas and programs or course classifications within the department. This format clusters faculty across content areas (horizontally) and programs (vertically). The circles, clusters where content areas and specific programs intersect, represent faculty members who either teach courses in the programs or have expertise (or interest) in content areas.

On the attachment, each of the content and program areas is represented by an academic coordinator or facilitator. At the start of a new year, department faculty members identify and vote on goals to be achieved. The specific academic goals for the year fall within the intersection of the various content and programs within the matrix. The leadership for getting started is the responsibility of the six coordinators, working in pairs, to establish agendas and meetings times with the rest of the faculty.

Important Considerations

Essential to the success of this model is the preparation of the coordinators as leaders in encouraging faculty participation in making decisions about courses, programs, or other academic activities. It is imperative that a "department time" be placed in the semester schedules so that all faculty can be available for cluster meetings when announced. When a cluster meeting is called and the agenda announced, any faculty member should be able to attend without conflict in the regular teaching schedule. If members of the faculty

decide not to attend these meetings, then the right to take up time during a faculty meeting when decisions on topics are requested is forfeited. The intent of this participatory system is that all in-depth discussions will occur in the smaller cluster meetings and only the refined recommendations will be brought to the total faculty for a vote. All cluster meetings are open to departmental faculty members who want to attend and participate.

Summary

Departments at institutions of higher education should be structured on a functional basis. Faculty expertise should be utilized and information sharing, openness and disclosure should be encouraged. Curriculum development, revision and evaluation is the duty and traditional responsibility of academic faculty members. When an organization is formally structured to allow individuals to express themselves, creativity and enthusiasm can be positively channeled. Chairpersons should begin to devise new models so departments may become more efficient and effective in the achievement of goals.

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ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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